

Dance Index

The Stage and Ballet Designs of Eugene Berman





EUGENE BERMAN, 1936

Photograph by George Platt Lynes

Dance Index

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Comment

The contribution of easel painters to the collaborations that create ballets is one of the most permanent of theatrical records. Long after the dancers are dead, and their performances vague memories, the sketches of the scenery and costumes are as fresh and evocative as the day they were designed. Indeed, very often, the sketches have an absolute expressed intention which is only approximated in the scenery when realized upon the stage. Certain compromises in execution are inevitable, and there are few theatres in the world today which are in a position to achieve the unadulterated ideas of the painter's original sketch. This is the main reason why so few easel painters are willing to face the dilution and brutal necessary re-

adjustments imposed by the commercial theater.

Dance Index inaugurated its series of monographs of important contemporary painters as dance-theater designers with Pavel Tchelitchew (January-February 1944). In November 1945 the work of Marc Chagall, was published with color plates. In the future, special issues on Pablo Picasso and Christian Bérard will appear.

Alison Delarue, author of this study on Eugene Berman, graduated from Princeton in 1928. He is on the staff of the Museum for the Arts of Decoration in The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, in New York City. His article received the cooperation of the artist.

COVER: Costume project for a Romantic Ballet, 1939.

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Drawing, 1941

The Stage and Ballet Designs of Eugene Berman

*by
Allison Delarue*

An imperial court city and one of the brilliant theatre centers of Europe. St. Petersburg had an extraordinary cultural atmosphere. Eugene Berman, who was born in that city in 1899,¹ owes much to the spectacular life and stage of the Russian capital.

At the age of five or six Berman was taken for his first visit to the famous Marinsky Theatre. Significantly enough it was a matinee of Petipa's ballet *The Hunchbacked Horse*, a Russian fairy tale. The illusion was complete. Berman cannot remember whether he was more fascinated by the stage, with the Italian ballerina Legnani dancing the lead, or by the event as a whole, the extremely beautiful state theatre with its audience, tiers of boxes and fantastic aspect when the lights were dimmed. The occasion was unforgettable and Berman caught a glimpse of his Muse in this world of make-believe. His family went abroad each year and he was also particularly impressed in Berlin and Munich by Max Reinhardt's productions of

Shakespeare, and with the operas of Mozart.

At the age of thirteen Berman began to study art with a teacher who was not a painter but an architect; and, instead of working in the studio, in some art school or in a museum, they frequently explored the noble and spectacular architecture of St. Petersburg. The eighteenth century builders of that city were Italian masters or their Russian disciples. St. Petersburg was laid out in the post-Renaissance style of tremendously impressive architectural units, and yet it was completely unique, more Eastern, grandiose and flamboyant, unlike any other city in the world just as each Italian city is unique in its particular way.

It was during the years when Serge de Diaghilev revived Ballet as a primary art that Berman started on his career as a balletomane. This was a very natural interest for a St. Petersburg and particularly for Berman, since Nijinsky lived in the same house and the doorman had fascinated the boy with magnificent tales of the dancer's acrobatics. It seems that Nijinsky always used the wide stairs, jumping up three or

1. Retrospective: *Eugene Berman*. The Institute of Modern Art. Boston 1941. Chronology p. 14.

four steps at a time, and this convinced Berman that the dancer was a supernatural creature or a bird. Between 1912 and 1918 Berman had continual subscription to Ballet Seasons and scarcely missed a performance at the Marinsky. The beauty of Ballet cast a spell upon him. *Lac des Cygnes*, *Giselle*, and *La Belle au Bois Dormant* were (and still are) his favorites. But, caught in the wave of enthusiasm over Diaghilev's triumph in Paris, Berman already felt a preference for the advanced theatre of his time. He collected the programmes and clipped press reviews; he heard in the concert hall the scores of the new music, and dreamed of emulating someday the scenic decorations of Bakst and Benois.

At that time, there was no advance guard Russian School of Painting of any importance. Berman and his brother, Léonide, had hoped to go to Paris to continue their studies when the Revolution and the exodus of their family made their hope a reality. In 1919 Eugene Berman entered the Académie Ranson. From the first, a serious student of Italian Renaissance and Baroque masters, he was definitely a romantic.

Towards the end of the 1919 season in London Berman caught up with the Ballets Russes, but he was greatly disappointed in the scenic effects of the Russian painters and in Fokine's choreography for the ballets, *Petrouchka*, *Scheherazade*, and *L'Oiseau de Feu*, which he had longed to see. The sketches for these ballets had seemed so magnificent a few years earlier, but now the whole productions looked shabby and "dated." Only the familiar scores of Stravinsky's music remained as fresh as ever. A few months later at the Paris Opéra he saw the Diaghilev Ballet, presenting the décor of leading modern painters like Picasso and Derain, and with these new ballets all his expectations in the theatre were fulfilled. He admired Derain's decoration for *La Boutique Fantasque* and Picasso's for *Le Tricorne*. In the follow-

ing seasons. *Pulcinella* and *Quadro Flamenco* opened an unexplored world of scenic possibilities.

In 1922 Berman made his first trip to Italy. The country as a whole, its architecture, its ruins, the splendor of the paintings of the old masters, fascinated him: the quality of the air, light and clouds, the blue of the sky, the shape of olive trees, the vendors and beggars in the streets of Naples, the unforgettable melancholy of the Roman Campagna. Innumerable out-of-the-way discoveries, from the charm of intimate Bibiena theatres to the vigorous Sicilian puppets he came upon somewhere in Palermo were surprising and stimulating. Italy was a brighter optical world than the North; and its love of ancient and spectacular architecture, already sensed by Berman in St. Petersburg, became a complete revelation. The relation of stage illusion to civic architecture was grasped by him in these moments of youthful orientation.

Illusion on the stage, as we know it to-day in the theatre, was an invention of the perspective-obsessed Renaissance and Baroque architect-designers. What the ancients inspired in the Renaissance was carried to its logical and splendid development in Italian architecture from 1550 down nearly to the time of the French Revolution. The Renaissance remained aesthetically the key to all the wonderful Baroque manifestations; and it is the key also to Berman's love of architecture in general and of Italian in particular. As far as illusion on the stage is concerned, the new science culminated in the architectural scenery bordering the five streets which converge in the one proscenium piazza of the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza. Though this stage setting was not created by Palladio but by his disciple, Scamozzi, a great architect in his own right, it was for two hundred years a model for the ideal theatre and the ideal stage illusion.

The Renaissance passion for antiquity expanded with the free fantasy of Baroque art-



CARDBOARD AND CORK MODEL OF STAGE SETTING, 1936

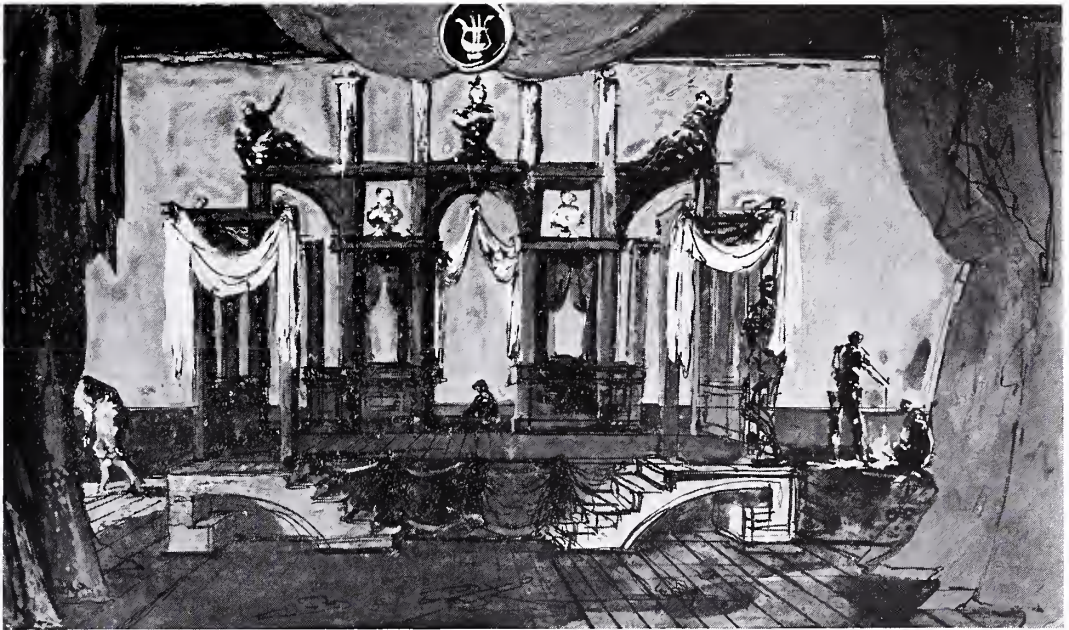
Wadsworth Athenaeum

ists and its vocabulary became as universally fantastic as it was familiar. The civic architecture of piazzas was laid out in the style of the most advanced stage perspective. Porta del Popolo stood before Rome as a proscenium and the Piazza del Popolo was a stage with its three-street scenic entrances. The piazza, the focus of the entire city, projected with its theatrical perspective the illusion of a more sublime city beyond. Palaces were placed like auditoriums between two stages, the garden and the *cour d'honneur*. The Mediaeval grand stair-case, which had emerged into the full light in the Renaissance, unfolded its dramatic levels and created space for illusions of further grandeur. Theatre à grand spectacle, unsurpassed in the history of the stage, was lavished on

actor and spectator alike and the best seats were in the painted proscenium. Unfortunately, the Court-theatres of private princes increasingly went financially but not imaginatively bankrupt. The later-day Baroque artists salvaged the Renaissance scene and set it up with appropriate nostalgia in an abstract dream-world of their own imagination, where their fancy played with its architectural props and gave no thought to the limitations of permanent structural necessities or to patronage. The century of brilliance maintained by the Bibiena family,²

2. *The Stage Designs of the Cooper Union Museum* by Rudolf Berliner. *Chronicle*, Vol. 1., No. 8. Museum for the Arts of Decoration of The Cooper Union, 1941.

The Bibiena Family. A. Hyatt Mayor; Bittner. 1945.



SETTING FOR WADSWORTH ATHENAEUM MUSIC FESTIVAL, 1936.

who in turn were maintained by their splendid connections in the world of social and political intrigue, now gave way to such artists as Juvara and Piranesi. They were at heart still architect-designers and no less interested than the Bibienas in theatrical illusion. *Trompe l'oeil* was their highly specialized device of perspective. "Of course," as Julien Levy³ has explained, "all perspective is *trompe l'oeil*, but in a special sense *trompe l'oeil* is more a Baroque innovation, used to break the plane not only backward but forward towards the spectator with startling effect."

Illuminated by the whole Italian world, Berman returned to Paris; and in 1924 his name became associated with a Neo-Romantic movement in painting. The group, including Bérard, Tchelitchev, Berman and his brother, Léonide, was influenced largely

by the Blue and Rose periods of Picasso. Berman, however, like the frustrated, Italian Baroque designer-painter-architects, had begun to salvage anew the Renaissance scene, and set it up in the revised light of that sensuous dream-world in his elaborate memory and automatic imagination. He did this very deliberately, because it was for him neither an end in itself nor a pastiche. Berman used these decorative elements because he felt a spontaneous relation to them, just as a dancer to-day may feel like a native in the tradition of Ballet. The original effect of Berman's style is definitely "Berman": in using forms already established, he did not in the least restrict the manifestation of his own personality. On the contrary, he found it here, more determined and more clear, as it moved within the definite limits of the convention of historic ornament.

Berman continued his intensive visits to Italy, and established himself as an easel

3. Announcement of Exhibition: Paintings by Eugene Berman. March 16th to April 5th. 1937.



BACKDROP FOR L'OPERA DE QUATRE SOUS. THEATRE DE L'ETOILE, PARIS, 1936.

painter of distinction in Paris. His first exhibition in New York was at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1930. Being impatient to work for the theatre and envying the earlier débuts of his colleagues Tchelitchev and Bérard, he had begun to make numerous rough sketches for the use of architecture in relation to illusion on the stage—the two being forever linked together in his imagination since the revelation of the Teatro Olympico.

Berman's easel painting had already created the illusion of a spacious stage by the use of architecture and proved it to be the perfect medium for perspective and for the projection of a mythical world. He performed magic on the flat canvas, creating an immensity beginning in the perspective, as a piazza creates within its stage both the subli-

mation of a whole city and the illusion of a greater city beyond. His architectural and landscape fantasies not infrequently have a narrow stage for human figures in the foreground, a series of framing side-wings, and a vista through to the centre. "A magnificent theatre in which color is everything,"⁴ perspective and *trompe l'oeil* and the brilliant theatrical style of his painting lure the eye to his visual spectacles.

At first the figures in his easel painting were placed purely to serve as a scale for the monuments. But gradually the dispossessed people of his Italian dream-world became the dramatic highlights of his scenes, full of

4. After Picasso. James Thrall Soby. p. 33. Dodd Mead & Co. (1935)

the emotional content of solitude, reverie, prostration and abandonment. The figures became neither mere scales for statuary nor mysterious dummies but the unsophisticated *dramatis personae* of primitive drama. Caught in the illusion of a brighter world beyond, they forgot for a moment their tribulations and their own doorways, rising out of grass and ruin and leading nowhere.

Preoccupation with theatre in his easel painting led Berman naturally to experiment with models of stage designs, and he made several dozen of paint, cardboard and cork.

Berman followed closely the revival of interest in Ballet. New stars were born and among the excellent creations of the 30's was the thrilling work of Bérard for *Cotillon* and *Symphonie Fantastique* which proved him to be, in Berman's opinion, the most

completely theatrical, resourceful and imaginative scenic designer of his generation.

In 1936, during the Hartford Music Festival, Berman was leader of the twelfth entrance of costumes in the Paper Ball. It was entitled: *Les Ruines d'Hartford: 3036*, and the next afternoon Berman made his début as a scenic painter with the setting for the *Matinée Musicale*.⁵ Henry McBride of the *Sun*⁶ said it "was so beautiful that all agreed it was perfection." Others of the press went on to declare his architectural fantasy so musical in appearance that additional music was almost unnecessary.

Berman's first assignment in the commercial theatre came the following year in Paris

5. *Programme: Hartford Festival*. 1936, p. 28.

6. *New York Sun*. February 22, 1936, p. 26.



RIGHT: COSTUME FOR DEVILS HOLIDAY, PRODUCED BY BALLET RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO, NEW YORK, 1939. LEFT: COSTUME FOR ICARE, PRODUCED BY BALLET RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO, NEW YORK, 1938.

for the *Opera de Quatre Sous* at the Théâtre de l'Etoile. He made innumerable sketches and eight or nine impressive décors. The action called for the introduction of explanatory placards, which he incorporated in the painted settings. These tattered placards, which looked as if nailed up in the painting, were a highly successful use of *trompe l'oeil*, a familiar device in the optical world of his easel painting. Representations of the character of the piece also appeared in the settings, singly or in tableaux. Berman designed the curtain with two beggars under the torn placard inscribed with the title of the play. When the curtain rose Berman's dream-world came to life. Unfortunately, it did not live long for the production had a short run.

In 1938 when the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo invited Serge Lifar as guest choreographer and incorporated his *Icare* (Opéra, Paris, 1935) in the repertory, Berman was invited to design new settings and costumes. The two backdrops were of archaic landscapes: the first in a brighter and a sunnier mood than the sinister second which came after the attempted flight of Icarus. Both created an elusive, mythological atmosphere.

Devil's Holiday in 1939 gave Berman his

first opportunity to work in the grand Italian manner, and, motivated by Paganini's music, he created a world rich in the festive aspects of Venice, yet lighted by a disconcerting, infernal glare. "Berman," writes Edwin Denby,⁷ "from whom we had wonderful drops for *Icare* last season, has given us five more which are as brilliant as any Baroque Burnacini, but full of a contemporary intimate and personal sentiment, and also scenically discreet; and his costumes are the most wonderful imaginable—just look at the two servants of the Devil, at the Devil's horrible disguise, or the farandole in the last scene, like a fashion show in heaven."

The Prologue presented a monumental doorway in ruins, with the inside of the bright palace shown most effectively through gaping holes and tumble-down walls. It opened the eye for the diabolical ball-room scene which was brilliantly lighted from within by a shocking-pink and red glare. The entre'actes were contrasting landscape with a wicked Paganini perched on a tombstone sawing a fiddle against a night sky of a lyre of clouds. Scene 3 was a hunting ground of fields, stones and a rocky bridge. The Finale,

7. *Modern Music*. Vol. XVII. Number 1, p. 56.



SETTING FOR ICARE, PRODUCED BY BALLET Russe DE MONTE CARLO, 1938

a glowing scene of the Venetian piazza with its Palladian architecture crowned by gymnastic statuary and sumptuous azure ducal banners. The costumes and masks were most inventive in grotesqueries; the beggars, the wood-gatherers, the vegetable-vendors, the wandering minstrels of Berman's easel painting came to life, half in and half out of the Venetian metamorphosis.

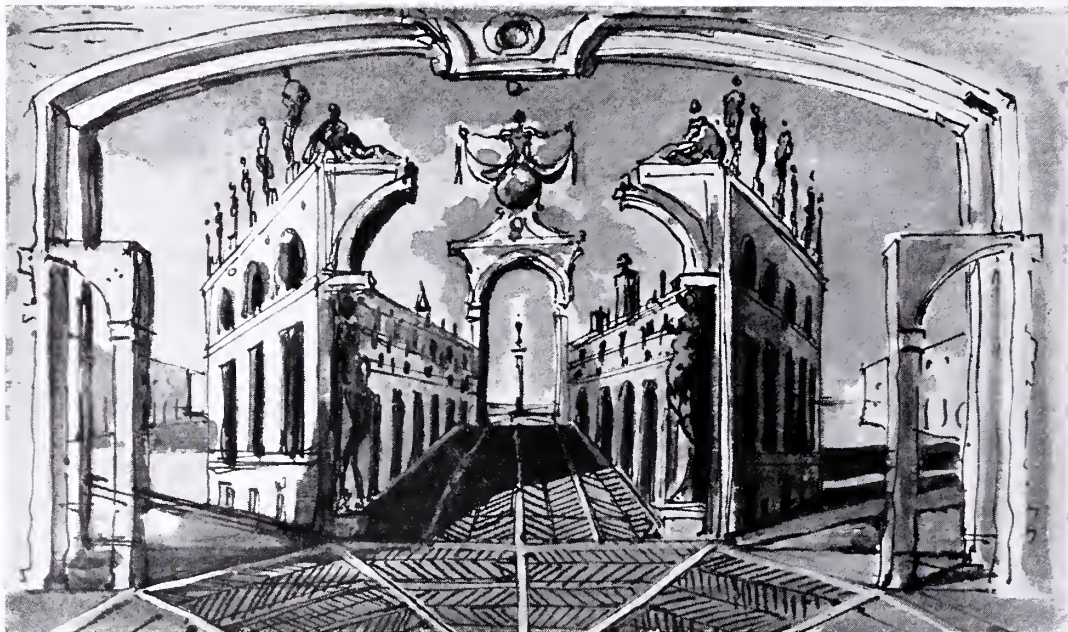
In the early 40's Berman designed innumerable master décors for a ballet on Mendelsohn's *Italian Symphony*. He liked the idea and had long thought about a ballet to that music. It was arranged that David Lichine, who was then in Australia with Col. de Basil, was to do the choreography. Nothing was definitely decided about the production except Scene 4, the Saltarello, which was to be a piazza with three scenic entrances as in the Teatro Olimpico. This year also saw Berman design many variants of curtains and settings for *Giselle*. The 2nd Act décors are atmospheric with the festooning of heavy, fringed curtains in rich, nostalgic

purple or green, opening on fragile, sun-shot scenes of Giselle's tomb in elegiac fantasy. The postponement of this realization of *Giselle* is a great loss to contemporary Ballet.

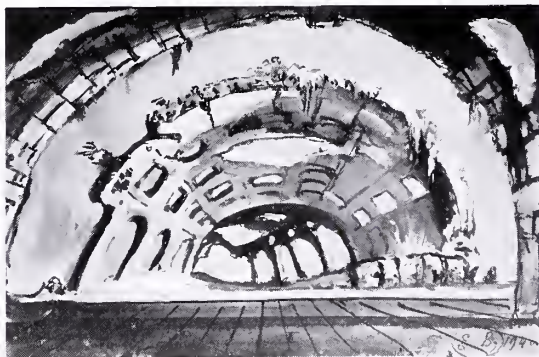
In the spring of 1941 Lincoln Kirstein invited Berman to design *Concerto Barocco* for the American Ballet Caravan. Berman, inspired by the noble simplicity of the Bach music, designed a setting of almost austere simplicity. A sense of infinity grew from Berman's use of architectural arches, in receding perspective towards the backdrop, pursued, as it were, with the relentlessness of a Bach fugue. In contrast was the sumptuousness of the rich, nostalgic blue backdrop and of the white clouds, which, in the wonderful illusion of space, seemed suspended between the arches. How often Berman defines a shape or a gesture in painting, or balances weights, as eloquently as Ballet! The costumes were of rich, architectural design outlined by leafy scrollwork or strapped on like the fantastic suits of divers in a mysteriously blue underwater ballet. Berman's decoration collab-

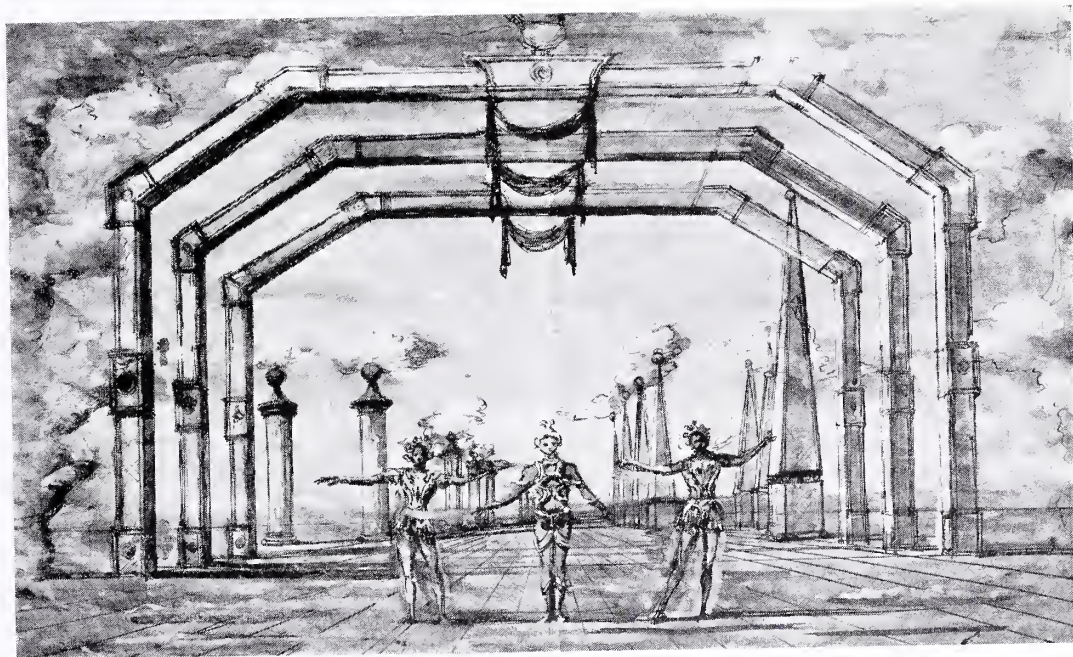


SETTING FOR DEVIL'S HOLIDAY, PRODUCED BY BALLET RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO, 1939.

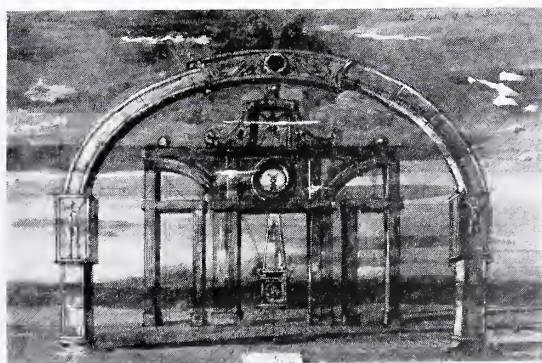


THREE PROJECTS FOR THE ITALIAN SYMPHONY, 1939. BERMAN CREATED A GREAT NUMBER OF SKETCHES FOR ALL SCENES OF THIS BALLET WHICH HAS NOT YET REALIZED PRODUCTION.





SETTING FOR CONCERTO BAROCCO,
PRODUCED BY AMERICAN BALLET CA-
RAVAN, NEW YORK, 1941. BELOW: DE-
TAIL FROM SETTING AND COSTUME
DESIGN.



orated with the "dramatic lighting"⁸ in Bach's music "that never was in the little Thuringian towns" and there is much in common in their craftsmanlike composition and in their love of Italy. The ballet was presented in New York and in South America but later Berman vetoed the further use of the decoration, since, in making the portable setting, it had been necessary to reduce to a painted backdrop his concept of perspective and constructed architectural fantasy.

In the summer of 1942 the Metropolitan Opera Association approached Berman to design Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Island God*. The book of this new one-act opera centered around an abandoned Greek Isle where a destroyed temple was to be rebuilt and then again destroyed during the course of the action. This, and the fact that it was meant for the Metropolitan's permanent and large stage, led Berman to visualize a serious décor, a real construction, which would be progressively built on the stage in accordance with the book and which could be collapsed for the Finale. The management at first approved of the principle but when the model was completed it was rejected in favor of the standardized two-dimensional setting, which Berman declined to execute. He presented the model to the Museum of Modern Art where it can now be seen.

In 1942 and 1943 Berman designed the scenery for *Romeo and Juliet*, a *réussite* of his greatest theatrical gifts. For this Italian story, retold by Shakespeare, Berman retained the sobriety of its fundamental tragedy of youth. Edwin Denby⁹ wrote of his work, "the big event and the most telling effect of the *Romeo* production is the extraordinary décor the painter Eugene Berman has given it. . . . Berman's Italian Renaissance décor is a serious work of art, like Picasso's *Tricorne*

or Bérard's *Cotillon*; like the works of Baroque designers. And I imagine later theatre lovers who look at the record of it will marvel at the refinement of sensibility it presupposes in the audience."

The drop-curtain for the Prologue created a Verona such as was never seen on land—a mirage, suspended in strati of clouds which cut the architectural fantasy into two mysterious parts. In the constructed décor of the main setting Berman had his first opportunity to project his imagination as a painter-architect-builder; and its functional beauty is apparent even in the sketches reproduced here. Aside from its reality of an Italian world of day and night it has additional changes within itself made possible by the opening and closing of painted draperies between the arches. The procession to the tomb and the Finale in the vault of the Capulets were staged with all the properties of a procession in the grand manner of Pompes Funèbres.

Romeo and Juliet is not only an entirely satisfactory world to look at (for all who have eyes to see) but also a remembered world to explore, full of occasional images from Berman's easel painting: hands bearing lighted torches in the night, crippled and blind beggars, and Elizabethan property women who sit in the right foreground of the stage like painted figures. The costumes are singularly successful in color and in design and were brilliantly executed by Mme. Karinska. Bright, mysterious and nostalgic, and sober at same time, the *élévation* created by its whole effect or by such isolated moments in the ballet as the golden vision of Markova being prepared for the tragic marriage, are beyond detailed description.

In the summer of 1944 Berman joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo to create *Danses Concertantes*, "a glittering little piece, brilliantly civilized. As a production it combines the talents of Stravinsky, Balanchine and

8. *Splendours and Miseries*. Sacheverell Sitwell. 1943, p. 187.

9. *Modern Music*. Vol. XX, No. 4, p. 280, 281.



MODELS OF SET FOR THE ISLAND OF GOD, DESIGNED FOR METROPOLITAN OPERA, 1942 BUT NOT PRODUCED.





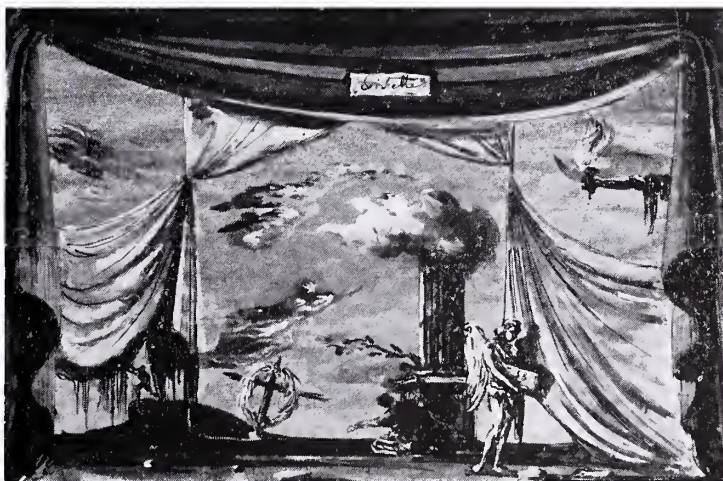
SET DESIGN FOR MIRAGES, 1940.



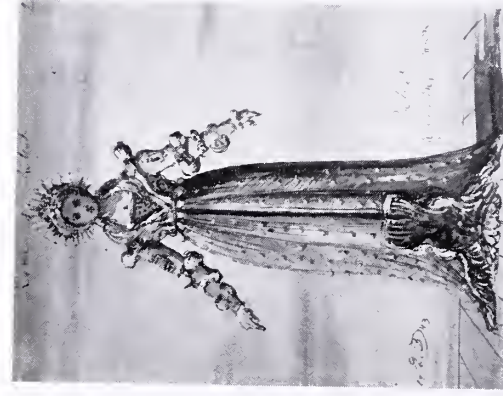
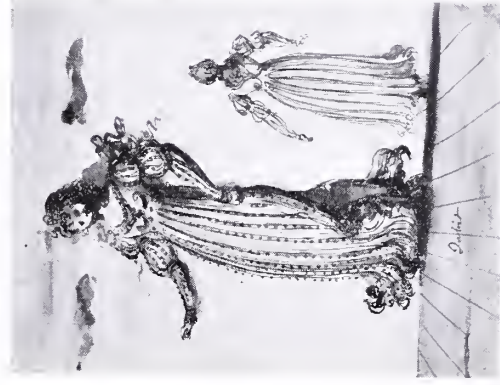
PROJECT FOR FIRST ACT OF GISELLE, 1942.



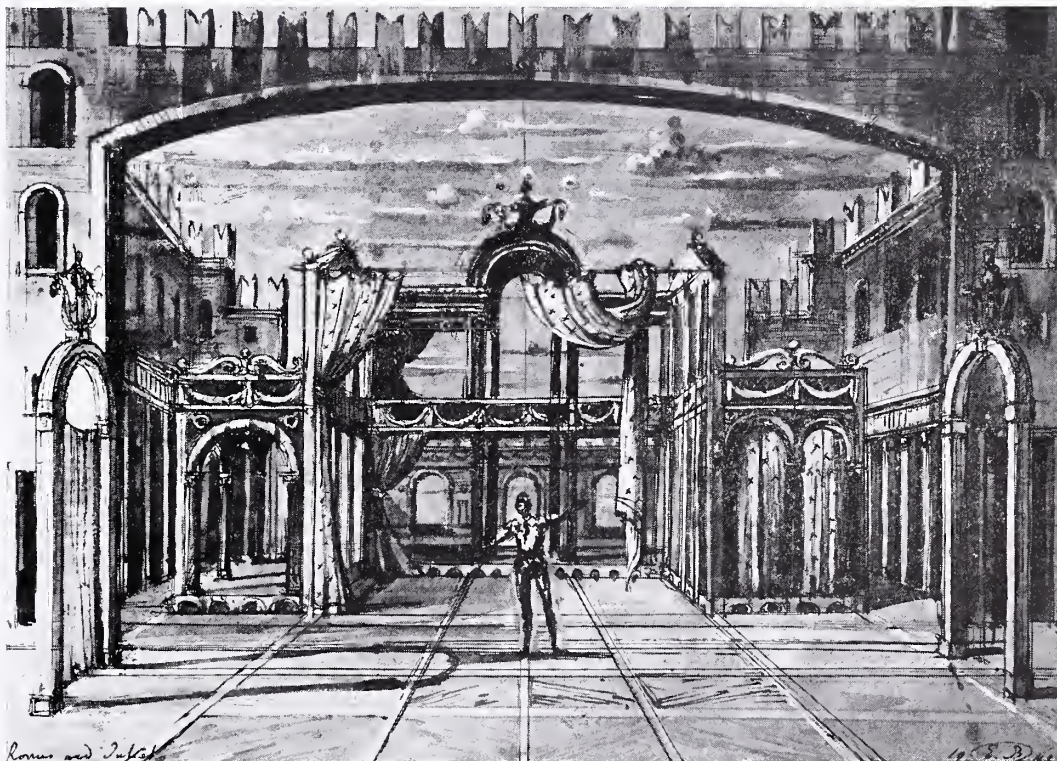
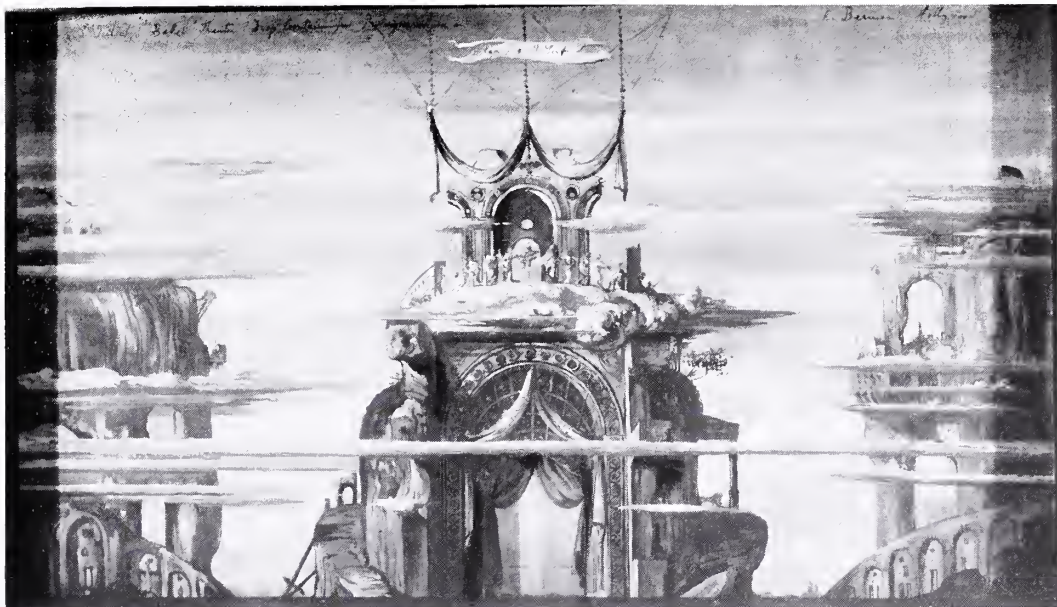
COSTUME DESIGNS FOR FILM: QUO VADIS, 1942. NOT PRODUCED.



PROJECT FOR SECOND ACT OF GISELLE, 1942.



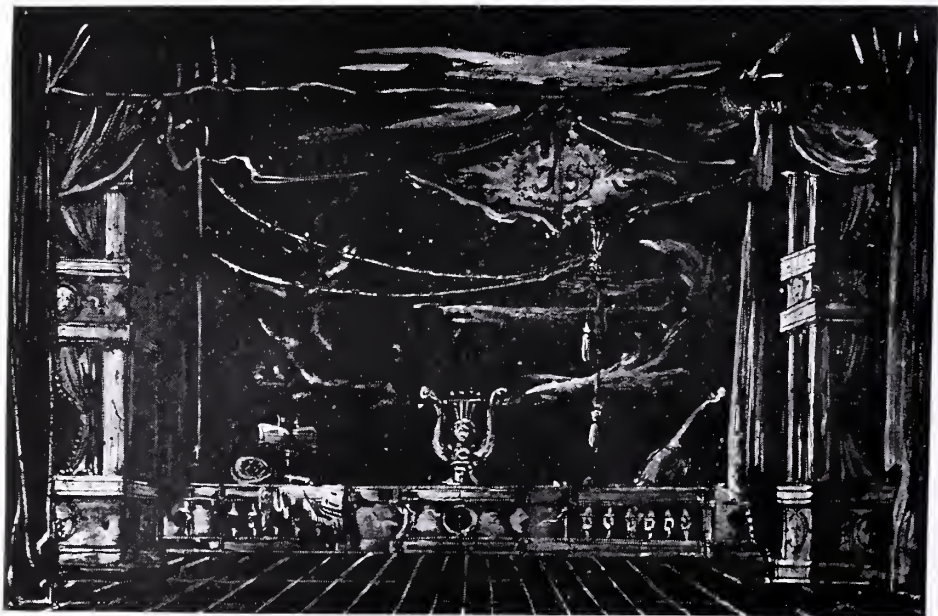
COSTUME DESIGNS FOR ROMEO AND JULIET, PRODUCED BY BALLET THEATRE, NEW YORK, 1943.



DROP FOR PROLOGUE AND SET FOR ROMEO AND JULIET, PRODUCED BY BALLET THEATRE, NEW YORK, 1943.



COSTUME AND SET DESIGN FOR DANSES CONCERTANTES, PRODUCED BY BALLET
RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO, NEW YORK, 1944.



Plates on this and opposite page courtesy Modern Music Magazine.



COSTUME DESIGNS FOR LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME, PRODUCED BY BALLET RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO. NEW YORK, 1944.



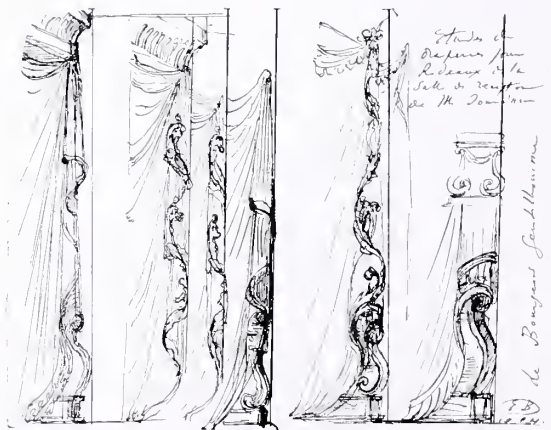
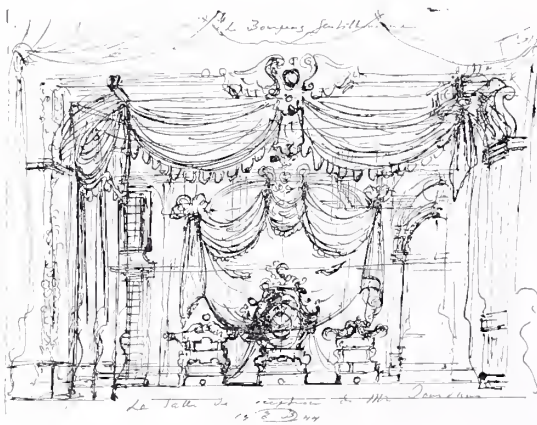
Berman—a ballet composer, a choreographer and a ballet decorator so eminent that each in his field can be called the best in the world. A new piece involving any one of them is something to look forward to; a piece that involves all three at once and allows each to do his sincere best, is that rare luxury, a ballet production in the grand style—in the grand style Diaghileff insisted upon and thanks to which ballet acquired its peculiar prestige.”¹⁰

Danses Concertantes has no story and Berman created a world handsomely natural in its own domain, essentially Painting *per se* and a painter's metamorphosis of the Stravinsky score. Berman here puts Ballet in the spot-light. The drop-curtain is a title-page of intriguing *trompe l'oeil*, lighted from within by smoldering reds; the lucidity of its composition is inviolable, and its bravura gives impetus to the elegance and fanfare of the arriving guests in the Marche-Introduction. The painting (being important in itself) establishes the spell of the brilliant party which quickly follows in the Pas d'Action and underlines the decisiveness of the dance.

10. *New York Herald-Tribune*. 17 September, 1944. Section IV, p. 2.

er's assurance. The ensemble of dancers are starred in the jewel-casket created by the night of the atmospheric black backdrop; and the brightly colored costumes, carrying out the ink spatter-work of the sketches, create lines which cut the bodies into facets and make the radiant choreography more startling. Berman has a passion for dressing up the human figure, yet he never loses his complete understanding of the body's sensuous architecture and of the effect of color and rhythm on its natural animation.

Near the close of the same season the Monte Carlo Ballet presented another Berman designed ballet, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. This production was executed and staged immediately following the opening of *Danses Concertantes* against incredible odds and in less than two weeks. It is a lavish piece with a drop-curtain that at once creates the ambitious world of M. Jourdain's *nouveau riche* household. The main backdrop of the throne-room is dry and dark and slightly sinister. The costumes, a *carrousel de Louis XIV*, are effectively displayed against it and the divertissements, one after another, create fountains and pyrotechnics of color. The costumes of the fencers fill the stage



Sketches for drop and detail of wings for *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

with a thousand and one metal buttons. The ladies in waiting with a kind of sinister humor are dressed entirely in black, and the blackamoors with feathers and silks give the scene its intimate pomp and circumstance. A group of players are satirically costumed in imitation of Comedia delle Arte style, adding to the considerable variation.

Eugene Berman is a comparative beginner as a stage designer when one considers his thirty years of activities as an easel painter. He has only begun to show what scenic revelations he is capable of realizing in the theatre. Not until *Romeo and Juliet* did he have an opportunity to work in the medium of architectural design where his many talents find full play and coordination. Although he has great success with simpler backdrops and costumes—as such a work as *Danses Concertantes* notably attests—it is in his architectural creation of a surrounding, in his building of space in which to house the performance, that he is most successful. Berman is a painter-collaborator in his general approach to the theatre. This is an important distinction. He does not make sketches to be faithfully reproduced as drops, but to be used as guides for his construction of three dimensional scenery. He approaches theatrical work with all his painter's imaginations and invention, but combines with these his architectural ability to build as well as ornament the stage for the performance.

Berman's sketches for designs, however, have their own life, are highly decorative in

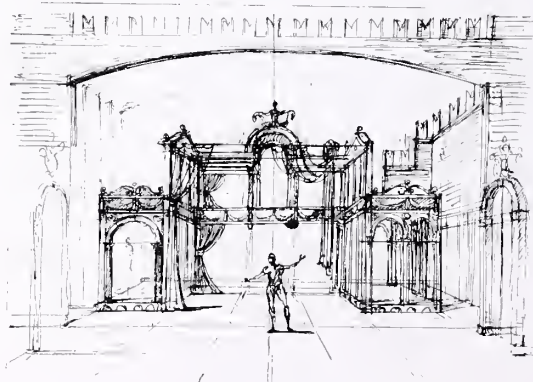
themselves and prized by Balletomanes as souvenirs of the theatre. There is brilliant facility in his line drawing and in his use of atmospheric wash backgrounds where dyes and temperas are nervously combined to create warmth of color. His sketches like his easel painting are excellent for perspective and for the creation of space through architectural elements, for air, light, clouds, and for the haunting quality of a remembered dream-world.

This sense of craft in Berman's work, from the draftingboard and studios to the staged production, makes it difficult for him to find opportunities for serious work in the theatre. Portable stage decoration, where in principle everything is painted on a restricted number of flat canvas-drops, legs and wings, imposes fatal artistic standards on scenic possibilities. Berman looks forward to the return of Ballet, now that it has completed its cycle of visitation, to the extravagant patronage and competent staffs of large, well-equipped resident-theatres. His interest in Opera (most of all he would like to design Mozart's *Don Giovanni*) and in Classic and Historic Drama would also call for a much more complete and resourceful use of constructed and painted décor. Theatre, it seems to Berman, is at once very real, very abstract and very fantastic; it requires all the arts to project its illusion, not merely painting and light—but construction, painting, sculpture and light, and this he believes to be the goal of a designer-painter-architect.

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The Stage and Ballet Designs of Eugene Berman

1936. Musical setting. Hartford Music Festival. Presented by the Wadsworth Athenaeum. Hartford, Connecticut.
1937. **L'OPERA DE QUATRE SOUS.** Musical play in 8 scenes by Bert Brecht after John Gay. Music by Kurt Weill. Presented by E. Aufricht. Théâtre de L'Etoile. Paris.
1938. **ICARE.** Ballet in 2 scenes by Serge Lifar. Percussion by J. E. Szyfer. Presented by Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Drury Lane Theatre. London.
- TWELFTH NIGHT.** Project for play, Jouvet's Théâtre de L'Athénée. Paris. Not produced.
1939. **DEVIL'S HOLIDAY.** Ballet in a prologue, three scenes and entre'actes by Frederick Ashton. Music by Vincenzo Tommasini on Paganini themes. Presented by Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Metropolitan Opera House. New York.
1940. **THE ITALIAN SYMPHONY.** Project for a ballet in 4 scenes by David Lichine. Music by Felix Mendelssohn. For Col. W. de Basil. Not produced.
1941. **CONCERTO BAROCCO.** Ballet in 1 scene by George Balanchine. Music by Bach. For Lincoln Kirstein's American Ballet Caravan. Hunter College. New York.
1942. Project for an untitled romantic ballet by Boris Romanoff for the Metropolitan Opera Association. Music by Schubert. Not produced.
- Transformation project. Maisonette into Theatre auditorium. For St. Regis Hotel. Not produced.
- NUAGES.** Project for costumes for ballet by Nina Theilade. Music by Debussy. For Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Not produced with Berman costumes.
- GISELLE.** Ballet in 2 scenes by Coralli-Perrot. Music by Adolphe Adam. For Col. W. de Basil. Not produced.
- MIRAGES.** Project for ballet by David Lichine. Music by Debussy. For Col. W. de Basil. Not produced.
- THE ISLAND OF GOD.** Opera in 3 scenes by Gian Carlo Menotti. For the Metropolitan Opera Association. Not produced with Berman décor.
- QUO VADIS.** Project for costumes for MGM production. Not produced.
1943. **ROMEO AND JULIET.** Ballet in a prologue, one act and epilogue by Antony Tudor, based on Shakespeare's play. Music by Delius, arranged by A. Dorati. Presented by Ballet Theatre. Metropolitan Opera House. New York.
1944. **DANSES CONCERTANTES.** Ballet in 2 scenes by George Balanchine. Music by Igor Stravinsky. Presented by Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. City Center. New York.
- LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME,** after Molière's comedy. Ballet in 2 scenes by George Balanchine. Music by Richard Strauss. Presented by Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. City Center. New York.



Sketch for set of Romeo and Juliet.